

5. Reminder: Student Council representatives will be visiting seventh-grade classes during homeroom to generate interest in the charity drive.



6. Today is Mr. Abram's birthday; we can't give his exact birth year because records were not kept in those days!

The book keeps everyone informed, enhances the idea of community, and, when humor is added, can create a friendly and positive tone to begin the day. The principal should write in the Look Book before leaving on the previous afternoon. The Look Book has a couple of extra benefits: It serves as a record of highlights regarding what took place each day at school, and it breaks down the isolation that sometimes occurs in schools by bringing everyone to a central area to read the daily comments. It really works!

A variation of the Look Book is used at P.S./I.S. 123 in the Bronx, New York. Virginia Connelly, the principal, uses a large flip chart on which to post daily announcements, recognitions, and communications. The flip chart is placed in the office where staff members check in daily.

## TIPS ON USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE A PRINCIPAL'S PERFORMANCE

By Dr. Kevin Pyatt

*We have gone from being hunter-gatherers of information to being filter-feeders.*

—Seth Lloyd

### Tip 1: Stay Current

- Use Real Simple Syndication (RSS) to keep up to date with critical information and to remain on the cutting edge of teaching and learning, professional development, and school leadership.
- With RSS technology, users create syndication feeds from a variety of information sources and within a given set of information resources.
- RSS allows for the delivery of essential information to your desktop.
- Receive updates from online resources without having to visit each site to see new material.
- Subscribe to online resources that are consulted regularly (e.g., Web sites, weblogs [blogs], wikis, podcasts) and feed new information to your desktop.
- These feeds are then accessed from the user's customized browser.
- Examples of feeds:
  - U.S. Department of Education (<http://www.ed.gov/rss/edgov.xml>)
  - National Science Foundation's Education Discoveries ([http://www.nsf.gov/discoveries/index.jsp?prio\\_area=7](http://www.nsf.gov/discoveries/index.jsp?prio_area=7))

### How

*Step 1.* Download client software (e.g., Feedview, FeedReader, BottomFeeder, others listed at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_feed\\_aggregators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_feed_aggregators)).

*Step 2.* Find feeds (e.g., Web sites that have the feed icon or an icon with “RSS” embedded).

*Step 3.* Subscribe to and syndicate (feed) yourself the information your care most about.

## Tip 2: Reduce E-mail

- Use blog technology to minimize email exchanges and maximize communication.
- Blogs can be used as school/class Web sites that have discussion forums.
- Forums are used as platforms to elicit feedback, share information, and/or respond to questions surrounding important topics.
- The moderator decides how strict or open the feedback and discussion boards are, along with who is a member of the space.
- Members can subscribe to RSS feeds originating from the blog.
- Examples of educators’ blogs:
  - PrincipalsPage.com (<http://principalspage.com/>)
  - 2¢ Worth (<http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/>)
  - Bud the Teacher (<http://budtheteacher.com/blog/>)

### How

*Step 1.* Download client software (e.g., Blogger, Edublogs, Drupal, Class Blogmeister, others listed at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>).

*Step 2.* Select or design an appropriate template.

*Step 3.* Develop a page.

*Step 4.* Post information and set up RSS feeds for members to subscribe to.

## Tip 3: Share Information Resources

- Use social bookmarking technology to share relevant information sources.
- Social bookmarking allows users to tag Web sites, online resources, documents, and materials.
- The tagged sites can then be organized, shared, and accessed by others in the organization.
- Network, subscribe, link, and/or post your bookmarks or others’ bookmarks that are relevant to your interests and information needs.
- Examples of online educational leadership sites commonly bookmarked:
  - techLEARNING (<http://www.techlearning.com/>)
  - ASCD For the Success of Each Learner (<http://www.ascd.org/>)

### How

*Step 1.* Download client software (e.g., Simpy, Furl, Delicious, BlinkList, Backflip, BottomFeeder, others listed at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_bookmarking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_bookmarking)).

*Step 2.* Find significant sites and resources.

*Step 3.* Tag these sites, archive, organize, and share using client software.

## Tip 4: Make Important Information Available and Accessible

- Use podcast technology to make important information available and accessible.
- Podcasts of significant or essential presentations, meetings, and forums can be made available to the school community.

- Podcasts can be downloaded and accessed at any time.
- Important meetings, conferences, training, and the like can be accessed by those who may have missed them.
- They can also be set up to be accessed via RSS feeds.
- Examples of podcasts:
  - The Practical Principals (<http://practicalprincipals.net/>)
  - The Podcasting Principal (<http://principalmiller.podomatic.com/>)

### How

*Step 1.* Obtain audio recording device (preferably digital), and make audio recording.

*Step 2.* Edit audio, and save to preferred format (e.g., .mp3, .wav, .ogg).

*Step 3.* Upload audio file to online platform (e.g., school Web site, blog) and/or to online libraries that warehouse audio and make it available to the masses (via, e.g., indiepodder, iTunes).

## Tip 5: Make Cost-Effective Technology Decisions

- Open-Source (Free) Software
  - Consider obtaining open-source software rather than purchasing licenses for similar products.
  - Dollars saved on nonessential licensing costs can be directed to promote purchasing of computers for classrooms (Solomon & Schrum, 2007).
  - Many emerging Web 2.0 software tools (e.g., social bookmarking, WebStart pages, blogging, wikis, assessment tools) are open source and highly usable. High usability minimizes training needs.
  - For a list of open-source software see <http://www.opensourceconsortium.org/>.
- Free Online Resources
  - Consider supporting the use of free online resources for classroom use to supplement and/or replace antiquated texts and curricula.
  - Many federal- and state-funded curriculum projects are highly accessible and available online (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, National Science Foundation, PBS)
- Wireless Connectivity
  - For areas of your building where Internet connectivity is limited, consider installing wireless networks, or Wi-Fi zones, for Internet access.
  - Although this is fairly obvious, wireless networks do not require the infrastructure of hardwired networks.

## Tip 6: Close the Digital Divide (Technology and Equity)

- Computers and their associated applications can serve as a “least restrictive medium” for learners of all ages and abilities.
- Computers can be used as an assistive technology for all students, including nonnative language learners and students with special needs.
- Assistive technologies, such as screen readers, are used to improve reading fluency and comprehension.
- These technologies are also used to promote universal accessibility for all learners. Technologies such as Skype can be used for promoting inclusion (see a classroom example at [http://share.skype.com/sites/en/2007/04/inclusion\\_helping\\_a\\_classmate.html](http://share.skype.com/sites/en/2007/04/inclusion_helping_a_classmate.html)).

**Tip 7: Use Technology to Support Learning**

- School leaders should expect new technologies to be coupled with well-accepted and -described teaching methods and implementations.
- Technologies that become widely adopted and persist over time are those that positively impact instruction, have well-grounded teaching methods and examples, and have high usability.

**Tip 8: Evaluate Performance**

- Consider utilizing online evaluation tools to measure performance within the organization.
- Online evaluations are advantageous because they (1) allow anytime access, (2) ensure ease of delivery, (3) eliminate data entry, and (4) have useful data analysis tools.

**Tip 9: Use Task Management and Scheduling Systems**

- Consider utilizing online scheduling systems for coordinating meetings.
- These systems allow users to see everyone's schedule and availability and minimize the time delay that might otherwise occur when scheduling via e-mail or voicemail.

**Tip 10: Know What to Look for in 21st-Century Classrooms**

- These classrooms are places rich in information access, networking, and collaboration (Jukes & McCain, 2007a).
- The tools of these environments are networked computers (e.g., desktop computer, laptop computer, PDAs, handheld devices).
- In such environments, students and teachers engage in research activities that incorporate a variety of information sources into their teaching and learning experiences.
- Learning in these environments requires access to networked computers that allow learners to go "off campus" online.
- Classrooms should utilize an acceptable framework for evaluating media that allows learners to do the following (Jukes & McCain, 2007b):
  1. Demonstrate initiative by critically assessing problems and implementing creative solutions
  2. Read for information and application
  3. Locate and manage resources for problem solving
- Classrooms should incorporate safe collaborative spaces for children through blogs and/or wikis.
- Classrooms should incorporate simulations and serious games that involve role-play, networking, and collaboration and center on solving and/or explaining complex phenomena. Examples:
  - Sid Meier's Civilization III (<http://www.civ3.com/>)—serious game on the dynamics of civilization
  - ElectroCity (<http://www.electrocity.co.nz/>)—simulation on the dynamics of building and managing a sustainable city.

### Tip 11: Make Good Hiring and Training Decisions

- Hire and/or train school leaders who embrace and welcome new ideas surrounding the methods that describe how technology supports learning.

### Tip 12: Learn About Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is not a technology in and of itself, but rather a description of the way in which the Internet is being accessed and used. Web 2.0 is really Web 1.0 operating at faster information-exchange rates, utilizing technologies that allow for more dynamic and collaborative interaction, and wireless access. The technology has made way for video and audio data exchanges at speeds never seen before, which can be accessed using wireless devices. Web 2.0 has been popularized because with its emergence has come new client software. This software bridges former applications with new applications that center on real-time interaction, collaboration, and wireless access (e.g., blogs, wikis, social bookmarking). In the context of educational organizations, the implications of Web 2.0 are great. Its technologies have the potential to change the way in which we access information, where we access it, and how we share it.

#### *A Story About Technology Adoption and Schools*

Fifteen years ago an educational technology expert answered a survey on technology and its associated implications on teaching and learning. One of the questions asked: "What has been the greatest technological achievement since the printing press?" One of the options to choose from was "the computer," which is what the expert picked. Several years later, the expert answered a similar survey. One of the questions was: "What has been the greatest technological achievement since the printing press?" This time the expert selected a new option—"the Internet." Based on these experiences the expert reflected, "While I am sure there will be similar surveys in the near future, I wonder what the options will be. Perhaps the next survey will have new options to select from: something like *wearable electronics*, *wireless energy*, and *ubiquitous computing*. Whichever the new option might be is not critical. What is critical is that we recognize that technologies have life spans. These life spans are governed by the following principles: The technology's (1) relative usability, (2) ability to do what other technologies have not, (3) ability to perform better than the technology it is replacing, (4) inability to do what others have promised it would do. These principles will dictate a technology's ability to persist within the organization."

#### **A Final Reflection on Technology**

Do not assume that technology will solve all of your time management and communication problems. But if you use technology properly, you will likely be more creative and effective on the job. As software companies have become more familiar with schools and their needs, the programs for scheduling, attendance, student records (including discipline), disaggregating data, supervising teachers, and report cards have significantly improved. However, it is a school's responsibility to examine the programs carefully and to encourage the software companies to work closely with schools to work out program glitches. It is also important to avoid a situation in which only one technology "guru" knows how a system works. If that is the case, the software program is not suited for the school. A cautionary note: Principals spend time with people. Because technology is fascinating and powerful, one can easily spend a lot of time in his or her office working with it. A fancy word-processed memo is no substitute for personal interaction.